



TESTIMONY FOR HB 1440
Courts – Parental Accommodations
Position: Favorable

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceeding Committee, We are proud to submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1440. Shore Progress (formerly the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus) is a nonpartisan civic organization covering the Eastern Shore of Maryland that advocates for policies that support working families and ensure that Maryland remains a leader in advancing economic and social justice.

Under current Maryland law, the vital work of parenting especially in the early years of a child's life is not sufficiently recognized as a legitimate reason to be excused from jury duty. As a result, many parents are forced to choose between fulfilling a civic obligation and providing essential care to their children. This creates an undue and unfair burden, particularly on mothers, who continue to shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities in our society.

Jury duty is a cornerstone of our justice system, but it was designed during an era that failed to account for the presence and contributions of women in public life. It presumes a level of flexibility that most caregivers simply do not have. A parent cannot reasonably be expected to serve on a jury for days or weeks while ensuring that an infant is fed or that a toddler receives constant supervision. This is not just inconvenient it is impossible, and the consequences for families can be significant, both emotionally and financially.

HB 1440 offers two straightforward but critical reforms. First, it requires that any circuit courthouse built or undergoing major renovation on or after October 1, 2025, include a private lactation room. This room would provide a safe, sanitary, and private space for nursing parents to pump or breastfeed. This is about more than comfort. It is about dignity, health, and public equity. Second, the bill expands the allowable reasons for excusal from jury duty to include breastfeeding mothers and caregivers of children under the age of three who require continuous care during court hours. This is a common-sense update that brings our justice system into closer alignment with the daily realities faced by Maryland families.

Other states have already moved in this direction. Twenty-two states including California, Connecticut, Illinois, and Virginia allow breastfeeding parents to be excused from jury service. States like California and Florida have enacted laws requiring public lactation rooms in courthouses. These are not radical changes; they are widely adopted best practices that center equity and compassion.

Maryland should join these states by passing HB 1440 and affirming our commitment to families, fairness, and inclusion in public service.

On behalf of Shore Progress, we urge a favorable report on HB 1440. Thank you for your time and consideration.